



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

May 10, 1999

Mr. William R. McCollum, Jr.  
Oconee Nuclear Site  
Duke Energy Corporation  
P.O. Box 1439  
Seneca, SC 27679

SUBJECT: DETERMINATION OF THE SCOPE OF TRANSMISSION LINES IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT FOR OCONEE LICENSE RENEWAL

Dear Mr. McCollum:

By letter dated July 6, 1998, Duke Energy Corporation (Duke Energy) submitted its application for renewal of the operating licenses for the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3 (Oconee). As part of its application, Duke Energy submitted an environmental report (ER) prepared pursuant to 10 CFR Part 51. On December 29, 1998, the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued requests for additional information (RAIs) related to the NRC staff's review of Duke Energy's ER. By letter dated March 4, 1999, Duke Energy submitted its responses to the NRC staff's RAIs. The staff has completed its review of these responses containing Duke Energy's position on the scope of transmission line rights-of-way impacts.

The Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the Renewal of Nuclear Plants (GEIS), NUREG-1437, includes an assessment of the environmental impacts related to license renewal and classifies impacts to threatened or endangered species and acute effects related to electromagnetic fields (electric shock) as plant-specific, or Category 2 issues. The findings of the GEIS regarding these two issues are codified in 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(E) and (H); and 10 CFR Part 51, Appendix B to Subpart A.

Specifically, the GEIS states that although the issue of impacts to threatened or endangered species is potentially relevant to all cooling systems and to transmission lines, without site-specific and project-specific information, the magnitude or significance of impacts on threatened or endangered species cannot be assessed. Thus, 10 CFR Part 51, Appendix B to Subpart A, recognizes that consultation with appropriate agencies would be needed at the time of license renewal to determine whether threatened or endangered species are present and whether they would be adversely affected by continued plant operation.

As provided in 10 CFR 51.53(c)(3)(ii)(H), the scope of the review of transmission lines for the Category 2 issue concerning electric shock is the set of transmission lines that were constructed for the specific purpose of connecting the plant to the transmission system. The NRC staff has determined that the scope of review of transmission lines for the Category 2 issue concerning threatened or endangered species should be identical to the scope of review for electric shock.

To identify these lines, NRC staff reviewed Duke Power Company's original environmental report, *Environmental Quality Features of Keowee-Toxaway Project*, submitted to the Atomic

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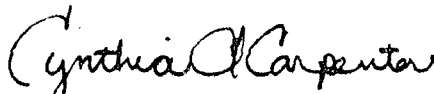
May 10, 1999

Energy Commission (AEC), NRC's predecessor, on July 10, 1970, and supplemented in October 1971. This report was submitted to the AEC to assist with preparation of a final environmental statement related to the proposed action of issuing an operating license (FES-OL) for the Oconee Nuclear Station Units 1, 2, and 3. In these documents, Duke Power Company states that Oconee Nuclear Station is an "integral part of the Keowee-Toxaway Project being concurrently constructed [and] the environmental aspects of Oconee are inseparable from those of the entire project." The supplement went on to state that the "transmission lines whose construction is necessitated by the additional electric power to be supplied from the Oconee Nuclear Station to Duke Energy's existing grid or system are listed and described as follows [.]". The transmission lines listed are Oconee to the Tiger, Central, McGuire, Newport, and North Greenville substations for a total of 330 miles of lines. These are the lines used in the NRC staff's evaluation of transmission line impacts in its FES-OL issued in March 1972 and constitute the licensing basis for the plant.

In its response to the staff's RAIs, Duke Energy attempted to justify its position that the scope of transmission lines should be limited to those lines that run between the turbine building and the 230 and 525 kV switchyards, totaling approximately 600 feet. First, Duke Energy argued that the 330 miles of transmission lines would remain energized even if Oconee does not continue to operate and, therefore, should not be considered in the scope of the proposed action. Since the basis for determining the scope of transmission lines is defined as those lines originally constructed for the specific purpose of connecting the plant to the transmission system, the argument that the transmission lines will remain energized irrespective of Oconee operation is irrelevant. Second, Duke Energy stated that the 330 miles of transmission lines were constructed as part of an overall increase in the capacity of the Duke Energy system and were inappropriately ascribed to Oconee. However, the response to the RAI also indicated that the Keowee-Toxaway Project resulted in the capacity to support 7000 MW of steam generation and that Oconee was the steam generation facility chosen to complete this project. Accordingly, it appears the lines were constructed for the specific purpose of connecting Oconee to the transmission system and the staff has determined that Duke Energy's arguments are not sufficiently convincing to justify deviating from the scope considered in the March 1972 FES-OL.

Therefore, the NRC staff will discuss the impacts resulting from maintenance activities associated with the 330 miles of transmission lines cited in the original FES on threatened or endangered species in its supplement to the GEIS. In accordance with the provisions of 10 CFR 51.41, the staff may request that Duke Energy provide such information as may be useful in this endeavor. If you have any additional questions or comments regarding this matter, please contact Jim Wilson at 301-415-1108.

Sincerely,



Cynthia A. Carpenter, Chief  
Generic Issues, Environmental, Financial  
and Rulemaking Branch  
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-269, 50-270, and 50-287

cc: See next page

May 10, 1999

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Sincerely,

Original Signed By:  
Cynthia A. Carpenter, Chief  
Generic Issues, Environmental, Financial  
and Rulemaking Branch  
Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-269, 50-270, and 50-287

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